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SERMON

Preached before the

SOCIETIES

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

At the Parish-Church of

St. Mary-le-Bow,

On Monday the 1st of January, 17th 11.

Colnett

By WILLIAM COLNET, D. D.
Late Fellow of *All-Souls-College* in Oxford.

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L O N D O N,

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Psalm. CXIX. 53.

*Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of
the Wicked which forsake thy Law.*

Or, as in the other Translation.

*I am horribly afraid for the Ungodly that
forsake thy Law.*

TIS impossible, if a Man looks abroad into the World, and surveys all the Scene of Action, and makes any Remarks upon the sundry pursuits of Mankind, but that he must see every where a great deal of Looseness and Immorality, Hypocrisie and Profaneness among Men, and all studiously bent upon following their several Lusts and Inventions, running greedily after damnable Errors, and resolutely persisting in the ways that lead to the Chambers of Death.

And as this is a very lamentable Prospect for any one to behold: So it must in a very extraordinary Manner affect the good and pious Man, who has a sincere Zeal for the Glory of God, seriously thinks of future Happiness, and walks himself in the ways of Godliness, in lawful Expectation of it. And who that has any Bowels of Compassion for his Brother's Welfare, and knows the Value of an immortal Soul, redeemed at the expence of the precious Blood of Christ, can be otherwise than deeply concern'd to see Vice obtain

tain so fatally, and prevail so successfully, to the utter Ruine of so many desperate Wretches.

Well might therefore the *Psalmist*, in consideration of such Aboundings of Iniquity, and the frightful Consequences attending, Lament and Bewail the sad and dangerous State of the Wicked; and partly out of Passion for the Love and Honour of God, and partly out of Indignation at, and fear for the Follies of the Sinful; Cry out as he did, *I am horribly afraid for the Ungodly, that forsake thy Law.*

From these Words, I'll consider,

First, That 'tis Natural for good and holy Men to be concern'd at the growth and prevalency of Sin.

Secondly, I shall weigh the particular Force of the Reason here specified; *because they forsake thy Law.*

Thirdly, Consider what Remedies ought to be applied in these Cases.

And, *Fourthly* and *Lastly*, set before you some Christian Considerations engaging all Men to Assist in a Work of such blessed Consequence.

I. And *First*, I am to consider, *That 'tis Natural for good and holy Men to be concern'd at the growth and prevalency of Sin*; I am horribly afraid for the Ungodly.

Pity, Compassion, and a Fellow-feeling, are such natural Passions to Mankind, and so woven into their Constitution, that who so is wanting in exercise of these, is usually reproached with the Character of a cruel and hard Heart; because there is scarce a living *Creature* but what is tenderly affected to its own Nature, and either bemoans the Miseries, or flies to the Succour of its distressed

Kind; and so prevalent is this Affection with respect to all the suitable Objects we behold, that even when we are morally a Tur'd 'tis not in our Power effectually to Relief them, yet then does common Humanity constrain us to shew our Tenderness and Concern, either by a vent of Tears, or some such other expressions of Sorrow for the Miserable.

And this is all so agreeable to the Example of Christ, and the Rules he left with Mankind, and all the Practice of the inspired Writers, that we read of nothing so often in the Gospel as the Duties of an unfeigned Love, fervent Charity, and brotherly Kindness, and the great Obligations we have, as Members of the same Body, to Sympathise with each other's Grievances, to bear one another's Burdens, and Weep with those that Weep, putting on the Bowels of Mercy.

And so far must we conceive our selves engaged to go with these Duties, as to bewail the sad Condition of all such who know nothing of their own Danger, or are at least so secure under their many sensual Infatuations, as not to Sorrow for themselves, herein setting before us the Pattern of our most Merciful Saviour, weeping over the deplorable Stupidity, and the approaching Desolation of *Jerusalem*.

Now if it must, in passing thro' the natural Course of this Life, be a dismal Spectacle, and a moving Sight to look upon all the various Scenes of humane Miseries, how this Man lies under expressible Torture and Pains; another under the formidable fate of Poverty, Nakedness, and Oppression; and a third under the disquieting Crosses, and Disappointments of this World;
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and most or all Men in their turns tasting the bitter Cup of affliction, and severally condoling the Wounds and Sufferings of this our frail Mortality.

It certainly must appear to every sensible and tender Christian much more ghastly to survey the immoral State of Mankind, and view at once the whole World wallowing in all manner of Impiety; this Man labouring under tormenting Vices, that wasting himself in baneful Luxuriencies, another daring Heaven by shameless Blasphemies, and crying Villanies, and Thousands and ten Thousands pulling down the Divine Vengeance upon them by their dissolute and rioting Extravagancies: And then to reflect, that all this heavy load of Impiety, and infinite Sum of vile Actions, and abominable Practices, must be accounted for before a great and terrible Judge, who is unalterably resolv'd to punish all the daring and impenitent Offenders, with Anguish which has no End, and no Abatements. This, this, if any thing, will call for the whole of our Grief and brotherly Affection, and break up all the Fountains of Christian Lamentation, Sorrow, and Compassion.

'Twas upon this melancholy Prospect and sad Face of Corruption, that God himself is said to grieve at the very Heart, when He destroyed the old World; and doubtless 'twas under dread of his exemplary Anger, and the severe Punishments which frequently do befall, and will inevitably overtake all obstinate and hardened Sinners, that the Royal Prophet did at this time afflict himself with such inconsolable Horror, Horror working up his Resentments into a per-

fect feeling of the State and Confusion of the *Reprobate*, and forsaken of God. And hereupon 'twas that he says, *Rivers of Tears run down my Eyes, because Men keep not thy Law; and I am horribly afraid: for the Ungodly which forsake thy Law.*

And must it not in like manner, do ye think, be a very afflicting Sight to all good People to be entertain'd thus daily with views of Wickedness, and from thence the reasonable apprehensions of Judgment; to see Men forego, against all Reason and Experience, the inestimable Riches of a sober and well-order'd Life, for nothing more than Vanity and Death, the sure but painful wages of Sin, and to forfeit the hopes of everlasting Life, for I know not what empty, momentary and worldly Pleasures, or what they sometimes falsely call the Goods and Happiness of this present Life?

And must it not be a further aggravation, to think that all these, who so pull upon themselves Damnation, without either Fear or Trembling, should be the only unconcern'd Persons, and perfectly Senseless *Idiots*, under the heavy Bondage of these their Miseries and Misfortunes?

And yet so it is. Those that are most exposed to ruin by their Sinfulness, are usually the Men which spend their Days most in idle Amusements, and stupid Gallantry, never all this while computing at what a dear rate they purchase their deceitfulness of Sin.

And must it not yet be more provoking, to see Men thus actually ripe for Vengeance, indulge Security; and *Fools* laugh and *make a mock at Sin*, which damps the Spirits of the Wisest, and quells the Joys of the best of Men:
For,

For, how can any thing sinful, and continuing such, be so absurd as to lay Claim to the least pretensions to easiness of Thought, who have the Wrath of God abiding upon them, and Hell open to receive them? Mirth should be the effect only of a Conscience void of Offence, the result of a pure Innocence, and the State of just Men made perfect thro' Holiness.

And yet, alas! these, while veil'd with the Flesh, were always Serious and Thoughtful, under the burden of their own as well as others Infirmities; being frequently on their Knees to implore the Help and Succours of Heaven, against all the common and avow'd Enemies of humane Nature; being found often sorrowing in solemn prostrations of Body, and piercing bitterness of Soul, for the Sins of an incorrigible People, and to deprecate National Visitations. They were constantly solicitous how to bear with Patience, and adorn with a holy Life, the Cross of Christ, and to follow their suffering Saviour thro' whatever Temptations and Perils; and therefore we must imagine them, like him, to be Men of Grief, and acquainted with Sorrow: The very business of Christian Pity being to bewail all such sad Objects as are under the Power of Darkness, and the original purpose of Christian Charity, to extend Universally, and contribute as far as possible to the saving all Mens Souls.

II. And thus I come, *Secondly*, to consider the particular Force of the Reason here specified; *because they forsake thy Law.*

As the Law and Will of God is the most indispensable Tye and Reason to his Creatures, and therefore not to be violated by Men who are the
breath

breath of his Nostrils; so certainly should it be the Care and Feeling of all so upheld, and depending, to Reason themselves into serious returns of Adoration, and steady Resolutions of Obedience: This being both the best Proof to shew that they do thankfully Embrace, and are religiously Affected for all past and present Benefits, and the surest Method to procure, with the continuance of these, the grant of more, or greater Favours.

For God to this end has declar'd himself a Rewarder, that all might diligently seek him, and run the Race before them, with Spirit and Patience; but withall has intimated, that he is a Jealous God, and therefore will be, upon every just Provocation, a consuming Fire to all the Children of Disobedience; so that we must conceive God not so positively determin'd to countenance or protect any People, but as they suitably apply, and carry themselves Worthily; and this Covenant always to be in Force, that as Men suspend their Trust, and withdraw their Faith and Obedience from God, so will his Providence either more or less recal his Comforts, Succours, and Protection from them.

And as this was the Case, holy *David* had just occasion to fear for those that forsook the Law; for whoever does this, does in effect disclaim the Government of God, and by taking off one restraint, which he imagines Troublesome or Grievous, he falls into numberless greater Inconveniencies, which tho' they flatter him with immediate Felicity, will anon fill his Breast with Sorrow, and his Mind with Anxiety; for Vice is a merciless and subtle Tyrant, and under the disguise of giving Ease and Indulgence, makes
more

more Slaves than the strictest Virtue, and the severest course of Religion, which they upon that very Account pretend to shun and avoid, could possibly do: For what's the Liberty of the Lustful and Sensualist, but a painful Licentiousness cherish'd in Madness, a power to ramble in the Dark, and a freedom to be Ruin'd?

And if these are the fairest Promises made to the most successful Sinners in this Life, what must we think of those who never knew or felt these sinful Advantages, but have ever griev'd under the rack of Wickedness, and are distress'd with Anguish; and when fill'd with the sight of yet greater Terrors to come, have no Remedy and no Expedient left, but the abused and uncovenanted Mercy of God to shift to?

And as this and much more is due and threatned to all the finally Wicked and Impenitent, it must needs go to the Heart of all the humble Worshipers of God, and Lovers of the Brethren, to see the Transgressors triumph in their Shame, and the Commandment of God, which is just, good and holy, set at nought by such Lawless Invaders: For every insolent Attack made upon the Power and Sacredness of God's Laws, is an Attack made upon his Sovereignty, and adds Life and Encouragement to other more insolent Attempts, and may, if not timely check'd, be of fatal Consequence; because God many times punishes exemplary and egregious Sins, with publick Calamities, and National Vengeance, designing frequently thereby to make the accurs'd Thing found among them, tho' properly speaking perhaps one Man's Crime, the Warning, Expiation and Amendment of the whole Tribe,
and

and Multitude ; and therefore we must conclude, that no one Member of a Body sins in any high degree, barely as a private Man ; for the Guilt spreads and infects by Connivance and Permission, and if suffer'd to go unpunish'd, it implies Consent, and becomes a common Fault, and as such endangers every Man's Peace, Security and Welfare ; it being a Method not unusual with Providence, in afflicting for flagrant Sins in this Life, to let the Innocent share the Penalties and Misfortunes of the Offenders.

And therefore as every one has reason to fear, where Vice grows daring and presumptuous, yet are all good Men more particularly concern'd at it ; Because,

First, 'Tis a high Dishonour offer'd to the great Lawgiver.

Secondly, 'Tis a great Scandal given, and a real Mischief done to others.

And *First*, As 'tis a high Dishonour offer'd to the great Lawgiver.

Now what can be more dishonourable done to God, who is Ruler of all things, than to treat his Authority with Disrespect, and to put so little Value on his Commands, as to break thro' them at Pleasure : For this is in effect to wrest the Scepter out of his Hands, make his Providence of little Use, and his Power of no Consequence ; and when this is done, what remains for every one so perswaded, but to take his Pastime in Impieties, and do what seemeth him good in his own Eyes ; by this Means making the Scene of this World, as some would have it be, a perfect State of Violence, Lust, and every evil Work.

But as we must necessarily infer other Things, where

where there is a God of Order, and not of Confusion; so must we conceive that he will heinously resent all such Insolence and Ingratitude; for what can be bolder done, than for the Pot-sheards of the Earth to say, who is God, and who is the Lord, that we should Obey Him? And what more Rude and Unnatural, than when we Live and Breath by a precarious Subsistence, that such Worms should despise the Hand that gives the Blessing, and in the Moment of Receiving Mercies, dispute the Terms of enjoying them?

Now as God has bound most of his Creatures under a natural Stint, which they cannot by a fixt Necessity exceed; so is it plain that Man has his Moral Restrictions too, beyond which he cannot pass, and be Innocent or Happy; and as God has more particularly shew'd him what is Good the better to induce him to a dutiful Submission, the Aggravation of Contempt will be for this; Reason the greater, and more unaccountable, and perhaps be follow'd with Laughter and Calamities equal to so profound Negligence and Stupidity: For who knoweth the Power of his Anger, whose Name is Holy, and his Laws Reverend? And who hath hardned himself against God and prosper'd? *The Transgressors* (saith the Spirit of God) *shall be destroy'd, and the end of the Wicked is, they shall be cut off.*

Secondly, But next we must consider this, as a great Scandal given, and a real Mischief done to others.

Now the Sinner that forsakes God's Laws, does not only affront Him by doing something Vile and Odious before Him, but he does a Mischief of a larger Extent; he gives offence to all the Pi-
ously

ously inclin'd, lays waſt their Labours, and renders of no Effect their painful Diligence; He ſets an Example of pernicious Influence, and gives Heart to all the Loſe and Diſingenuous: For Vice is of that infectious Quality, that it ſoon corrupts, and diffuſes its Venom wide, and with great Artifice; and 'tis poſſible, we know by Experience, for one ill Liver to do more harm to the Place and Neighbourhood he dwells in, by way of enticing Men to the like Exceſſes of Rioting, than 'tis for many good Men to reclaim the ſame, or others, with ten times the Trouble; or perhaps all their after Labours; for as Men are naturally inclin'd to Ill, a very little Perſwaſion will go a great way to force them to a Compliance, and yield to that Temptation, which cloſes already with their Wiſhes.

'Tis by this Means we ſee ſo many Venturers in Iniquity improve quickly, and beyond Measure, and raw Beginners ſoon become hardened Villains; for Sin ſteals, and infatuates unwarily, is buoy'd up by Company, and ſupported by Numbers; and Authority thus gain'd, will eaſily prompt Men to the vileſt Imitations: For Example is many times the only Rule the Crowd and Multitude are guided by, and ſometimes even wiſer than they are entangled in its Wiles, and caught by I know not what ſpecious and falacious Appearances, *in the Traps of the deceiv'd Multitude*; and under that Miſt and Dazle, they will run their Heads like them againſt all Truth, Reason, and Happineſs it ſelf.

And 'twas this contagious and filthy Con-
verſation of the Wicked, that vexed Lot, that
righteous Man, who *dwelling among them*, and
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seeing and hearing them, *vex'd his righteous Soul from Day to Day with their unlawful Deeds*: And who among all the Religious can, in the midst of so many melancholy Occasions of sinning, temper Grief, to see Men seduce and be seduced, and be led by Shoals, to perish in their Follies.

And thus I come, *Thirdly*, to consider what Remedies ought to be apply'd in these Cases.

Now, as all Sin is a transgressing God's Laws, and Vice is in its baneful Consequences, the Weakness and Reproach of any People, as it brings them under many natural Decays and Languishments, and many civil Errors and Mismanagements, and exposes them moreover to the Anger and Resentments of a just and righteous God: So should it be the principal Care of all Administrations and Governments, to fix their Foundation and Establishment first in Religion; it being the great Sense of this, and the Exercise of all other just and lawful Measures, which will best secure Peace and Quiet to each single Member, furnish the whole with Strength and Wealth sufficient, and bring down the Blessings of Success and Happiness upon all their Labours.

And whereas all Laws are formed to this End, and Magistrates are appointed to this Purpose, to be a Curb to the Lawless, and a *Terror to evil Doers*; it must be both the Interest and Wisdom of all States, not to recede from the strict Observance of the one, and not to suffer the Powers of the other to be invaded with Disdain or Impunity.

For all Laws are verily no more than a dead Letter without due Execution, and actual Enforcement.

forcements, and a perfect Mockery, if not render'd able to preserve their proper Awe and Reverence, by occasionally using just Rigour, and exerting due Severities; and so far are they, tho' calculated with the greatest Wisdom in their first Design, from being the Glory of a Country, that they rather bespeak its Wantonness, and Folly, whenever they abate of their respective Sway, and dwindle into Favour, Disuse, or Ridicule.

And so likewise all Magistrates are but insignificant Things, and like Thunder afar off, quite disregarded, if they have not Zeal equal to their Station, and a Courage suitable to maintain the Cause they are entrusted with; and therefore 'tis not enough for these, to display the bare outward Ensigns of Authority, but to apply their Censures watchfully and discreetly, that so the true Weight of their Office may be found rather in the Correction and Amendment of all the Wicked within their reach, than in their own peculiar Trade or private Interest.

And to this End, 'tis highly requisite, that the Magistrate be of good Report, and stand upon an unblameable Bottom himself; for all Persuasion and Advice is so much the more convincing, as it comes from a good Man, and a virtuous Practiser; and Punishment so much the more available, as 'tis laid on by one, that professedly hates all Wickedness, as is to be seen by the Conduct of his own Life; for he that rebukes, should be innocent himself, and lie obnoxious to no Recriminations, if he means to chastize with Success; for tho' possibly a Man may make himself dreadful, as to his authoritative Capacity, yet that reaches only the outward Person
of

of the Criminal, but never gains, as it ought to do, upon his Heart and Affections.

But however this may, or may not be the Case of the Magistrate; yet is it fit on all Hands, that no Impiety pass without legal Cognizance; for Correction, of whatever kind, is a Mark left on the Offender; and it has been found, that this fear of Infamy, or bodily Pain, has prov'd the healing and preservation of many a Soul.

But when Vice is not thus guarded against, Miserable is the State of such an expos'd and abandon'd People, because this is to lull Souls into eternal Misery, and by a Lenity and Indulgence, falsely so call'd, to betray Christ, and cry Peace, when it may be sudden Destruction is upon them.

As 'tis therefore publick Shame, and impartial Animadversions, which awes Men most into Peace and good Manners; for this reason Severity is many times the truest Compassion, and due Penalties commonly the most profitable Medicine; for tho' they be a Sore and Gaulling for a while, yet if they teach the Sufferer better Things, and teach him Reformation, they prove in the event to be the Stripes of a Father, and the Counsel of a Friend.

But among all Expedients thought on to improve Mankind, I know none better than that which has been concerted by the Piety and Wisdom of many generous and well dispos'd Souls here present, who have bound themselves under all the sacred and social Tyes of Virtue and Friendship, to retrieve, if possible, *ancient Simplicity and Expiring Holiness*.

And as this is of all the most likely remaining Remedy, I persuade my self that all who have enter'd upon, and labour'd in this blessed Work, will

will never flinch from it ; it being a Design undertaken in imitation of our great Redeemer who *went about every where doing Good*. This was the Practice of all the inspired Teachers, and the Task of all the Apostles ; and if you should, like some of those, be treated with Calumny and Reproach, in the discharge of this Trust, you must remember the greatest Goodness and the Innocence of the holy Jesus, was before you so aspers'd.

Now, as to be faint and weary in well-doing, is a down right Treachery, and the worst of Back-sliding ; so 'tis what we least suspect in any who are engaged in this Noble Enterprise ; because for as much as you have born down the first, and greatest Difficulties, and have gain'd considerable Ground, and made within these few Years no mean Conquest over many lewd and disorderly Practices ; I am inclinable to think, that Victories of this kind will continue to fire your laudable Ambition ; and the Glory already obtain'd, make you look out for new and fresh Advantages, and allure you, by your Care and Industry, so well already laid out, to turn more unto Righteousness, or to bare Testimony against all the Impious and Prophane, and to live and die under this Persuasion, that you cannot better serve Christ, than to labour the Conversion of Souls ; and by working at the Salvation of others, to ascertain in the Great Day, your own.

And therefore, as I cannot but Sympathise with your Efforts, so widely and successfully carried on ; I shall for your farther Advance and Continuance in Labours of this kind,

IV. Set before you, *Fourthly and Lastly*, some Christian Considerations obliging all to Assist and
Abound,

Abound, in a Work of this blessed Consequence.

Reformation, I know, has been an exploded Name, but so was Christ Crucified once a *Scandal* to the *Jews*, and to the *Greeks Foolishness*; but nevertheless we are assured, that this Foolishness, then so call'd, was the Wisdom of God; and the Preaching Faith, Righteousness and Repentance, the great Errand and Accomplishment of the Son of God's coming in the Flesh: And therefore Men fully persuaded of, and acting under the Power of such awakening Truths, must not be presently beaten from their Hopes, by any Discouragements given, or artful Rubs put in their way, by those who have not the Sense or Grace to arrive at the same degree of Conviction, and the like measure of Piety.

First, Remember therefore, that the Honour of God calls for this your Way, and your Aids and Assistance in the most Solemn Manner: He is a universal Father and Maker of all things, and as such requires the most manifest Attestation of our Homage and Gratitude, and to be Worship'd in the manner which does him the best Service, and gives Him the greatest Glory; and what is this, but to come before Him in Bodies and Societies, which is the visible Communion of Saints on Earth, and Fellowship one with another, and the very Beauty and Strength of all Holiness, and to assemble our selves together in Numbers, to make a publick Profession, and speak good of His Name, and by our shining Examples, to allure others to imitate and teach our Childrens Children to do the same; and as we all share in common the Mercies of God, to agree and join in the

like Declaration of His Graciousness, and in the united Tests of our Obedience; for this is that Contribution, which every Christian Member is obliged to bring into the Church, as it tends to the farther display of the Christian Faith, helps to maintain Religion creditably in the World, and gives Countenance to all good and holy Living, by mutual Supports, and mutual Encouragements.

For tho' every Man's Work shall at last be only to his own Soul's Profit, yet the doing good to others, while we are upon Earth, is that very Work; and the being useful in our several ways, whether of Example, Precept, or Reproof, is certainly the most valuable and distinguishing Character of a good Christian; and 'twas under these Views, that open Confessions and undaunted Sealings to the Truth, either by a righteous Life, or a more glorious Death, was so much the Inclination and Glory of the Christians of old; they held it a most important Duty, as to retain the Doctrine of Christ pure, so to let the Practice of it be undefiled in their own Lives; and while they were contending earnestly for *the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, they were equally as intent to hand it down with the same Fidelity to after Ages.

And what is your Undertaking less than a Copy of that Spirit of Piety; and a noble Emulation, no way inferior to their unwearied Patience in well-doing; but such indeed as we must all foresee, will be attended with greater Difficulties than they had, as the World is since plung'd into greater Wickedness; and because it cannot be suppos'd so easy to repair the wastings and decays

cays of Virtue, in dissolute and revolting Sinners, as it is to imprint in an ignorant, if a well-dispos'd People, the first Notices of Religion.

But forasmuch as here is so venerable a Body of Pastors and Teachers of the Church of Christ, and so Graceful a Number of her Ingenuous Sons, of Character and Figure, all able to add Weight to their Councils, as well by the Eminency of their Stations, as the Lustre of their constant Course of good, and frequently signalized Actions, some met, and others imbodyed together, to share in the Adventure of doing Good; and many other Serious, Zealous Christians, well resolv'd under such warrantable Influence, Countenance, and Instructions, to endeavour this Work of Mercy with a pure Heart, and a Faith unfeigned: It would be irreligious to distrust the Concurrence of Providence, and the Blessings of Success upon such brave Resolves; because as God has intimated, that He will never fail or forsake his chosen Servants, we must conclude the Promise does reach hither, and that the Issue will effectually answer all these wise concerted Purposes.

May therefore the Grace of God, and Grace sufficient, alway accompany whatsoever Struggles of this kind; and as it is a Labour of the most generous Love, I hope no one will be dismay'd, if peradventure Oppositions of sundry sorts should present themselves; for as it is always the Custom of the Wicked, in favour to their Lust, to treat disrespectfully those that alarm them with the sense of Sin, and the fear of Punishment; so is it the Glory of the Gospel, to have, upon all proper Occasions, signal Sufferers for it; because

'tis such Trials as these, which discovers the soundness of Faith, and does credit to the Cross, which is always an Emblem of Pain and Peril to the Defenders of it.

But as all are sworn to this Cross, and the Crimes of Sinners, by being winked at, do become ours, and a Soul may perish for want of being turn'd away from the Error of his Ways; 'Tis heartily wish'd, that all who are engaged by Vows and Promises to Christ, would not so compliment the World with the breach of their Faith, as to yield to the Flatteries of it themselves, or permit others, without attempting their Rescue and Deliverance, to go securely and fatally along with it: Now in reality, no Plea of Unseasonableness, and no necessity of Time or Place, can be a good Argument for the neglect of impleading Vice; because amendment of Life, and the promoting good Manners, is the great, and therefore ought to be the first and constant Work of every good Christian; and so likewise no Fear or Favour should prevail, in bar to Reproofs; because the Anger of God, which is the most reasonable Fear, may visit for this very remissness, for we are assured *Eliz's* Fault was, the vileness of his Sons, which he restrained not.

Now I am very sensible that good Men, in such a course as this, must run thro' a great deal of Envy and Clamour, Dirt and Calumny, and will have the heavy charge of *Busie-bodies* and *Informers* laid at their Doors; but can any one be too Stirring or Busie in saving Souls? Was it not the Business, and is it not the Command of Christ himself? And why must *Informers* be such an odious

dious Name, and *Reforming* such a reproachful Office, when no Nation, or its Laws at least, can subsist in Credit, Power, or Safety, without the one, and no Christian get to Heaven without the other.

We must all therefore come to this Resolution at last, as 'twas St. Paul's, *not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, which is the Power of God unto Salvation*; and so be as bold in its defence, as the lewd Scoffers can possibly be in defiance of it; for tho' it may have in appearance the shew of Modesty, to touch but lightly upon Mens Sins and Follies, yet is it in reality, where the warmest Zeal is necessary, and will scarce suffice, nothing less than a coldness and faintness in Religion; for singularity it self is Graceful in such a Cause; and tho' it may happen to be reviled by the Tongues of ill Men, yet will it always appear so much the more conspicuous and acceptable before God and good Men.

And St. Paul, we must remark, is recorded more especially in the Gospel, as an Example of one always owning his Principles, and perfectly resolv'd to assert the Truth and Glory of the living God in spite of all Dangers, and to overlook whatever temporal Hazards, provided he might *add daily to the Church such as might be Saved*; and so much had he this at Heart, that he even wish'd himself I know not what, and I know not how Miserable, for his *Brethrens sake in the Flesh*; and never was he more daring, than when 'twas to preserve and recover Men so as by Fire; and upon the Occasions of pressing Faith and Repentance home to the Conscience, and talking of *Righteousness and Judgment to come*, such was the force of his Arguments, and the weight

weight of his Reasonings, that all the *People stood amazed*, and the Rulers themselves *Trembled at them*; and thus I question not but it may be, tho' in a lesser Measure, by the blessing of God, with other Labourers in the Vineyard, where an imitation of the same Fervency, and seriousness of Heart, prevails upon them to farther Godliness.

Secondly, And as for our next Consideration, Let it be the Debt due to our Country. We are all by a civil Obligation bound, as Members of the Body Politick, to support each other; because in Reason as well as Christianity, nothing can stand long or secure, without mutual Love, Unity, and Harmony; and therefore since no Man lives to himself, as a distinct Property; or dies to himself, without being accountable for the publick Spirit he has shewn, and the Charity he has done, as a sociable Creature, and a Member of Christ's Body; for this reason Vice ought to be discountenanced in common, as it enervates, waists and diverts the Strength of a Community to ill or wrong Purposes: For Vice teaches Men to prey upon each other, is a Burden to the Diligent, a Snare to the Weak, and a Scandal to the Good; and no sooner does any one commence egregiously Wicked, but he acts an Enemy's Part, as breaking in upon the Laws, the National Barriers, which is as much an injury and an affront offer'd to the regular Administration, by which a Kingdom stands, as it is to invade it with open Hostilities, for that is sometimes the more generous Inroad, and much easier to be provided against.

And

And when we consider farther, that hereby we provoke the Vengeance of God, and that the Sins of some may threaten all; Sin is in this respect alway an impending Terror, and a common Calamity, and so much the more to be charged upon some Nations, inasmuch as they have had larger Supplies of Grace, and more temporal Blessings than others, but never have made any answerable Returns: And when Sin involves in this high degree of Ingratitude, what may we not apprehend and expect of Severity and Chastisement from God: In short, Sins are always the Beginnings of Sorrow, and when they go barefac'd, and are insulting, they are a for-boding Insolence, and as such generally they forerun and prelude to severer Judgments, and finishing Miseries: And who is not *horribly afraid for these things!* And who will not think it a Duty, in such a disconsolate State of Affairs, to mourn and atone, by all the requisite and appoiated Means, for himself, and the Errors of the People, that so peradventure the Lord may comfort us, and spare the City for such timely Humiliations, and seasonable Amendments.

Lastly therefore, let us consider, that the true Christian Conversation ought to be in Heaven; and what does this imply, but that while we are under the Chains of this mortal State, and wading thro' the trying Course and Temptations of this Life, we should, with a Care superiour to all, whether its Pleasures or Troubles, set our Affections intirely above, and by a Solicitude equal to the Promises of that blessed Place, refine gradually *from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, and make our Advance thither in actual Holiness and Purity of Manners, as God is holy and pure.

And as we are told, 'tis the Business of the Angels themselves, *to do the Will of their Father which is in Heaven*; and they have Pleasure *over one Sinner that repenteth*; it must be our Duty to do the same on Earth, and certainly to grieve in some Proportion

portion to the Loss of all unrepenting Sinners; and if the Prodigal returned is at all Times welcome to the Bosom of the Father, how must we think they will be received by him, who by their Prayers, Tears, Advice, and all other friendly Restraints, have been the blessed Occasion of sending such Prodigals Home? Now doubtless all such who have set Men right in the Way of Salvation, that so they, when converted, might strengthen more of the Brethren, do do the greatest Work of Mercy, and shall have in Recompence of such their faithful Applications to Righteousness, the faithful Servant's Praise, and the righteous Man's Reward.

Since therefore, in a Word, *the Fashion of this World passeth away*, and we our selves like that shall be dissolved, and all earthly Mindedness shall end in Disappointments, *and profit nothing in the Grave, whither we are going*, but is rather vain in the Lord; and since 'tis the light only of a well-spent Life, and the sense of having done Good among Men, which is the *Hope which maketh not ashamed*; what manner of Persons ought we to be in holy Conversation and Godliness? That so, we may be found, in the great Day, thus doing when the Lord cometh.

F I N I S.

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